

EPA News Release

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EPA: Coeur d'Alene Tribe can develop water quality standards for the southern one-third of Coeur d'Alene Lake and St. Joe River

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved the Coeur d'Alene Tribe as eligible for "treatment in the same manner as a state." This decision approves the Tribe to establish water quality standards under Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act and to issue water quality certifications under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act for Reservation waters of Coeur d'Alene Lake and the St. Joe River, Idaho.

"We are very pleased to formally recognize the Tribe's standing under the Clean Water Act," said Ron Kreizenbeck, acting EPA Region 10 Administrator. "It is important that waters of the Lake and the St. Joe River within the Reservation, receive protection similar to that provided to the northern portion of the Lake and throughout the State of Idaho."

The Tribe will develop water quality standards for the southern one-third of Coeur d'Alene Lake and St. Joe River, but not Heyburn State Park or other areas of the Reservation. Once those standards are developed, they will be available for public review and comment. EPA must approve the Tribe's standards before they go into effect under the Clean Water Act. Once the standards are in effect, EPA will continue to be responsible for taking enforcement actions for violation of permit conditions based on those water quality standards.

The State has established water quality standards for the northern two-thirds of Coeur d'Alene Lake. The lower one third of the Lake is under the jurisdiction of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. The decision to grant the Tribe "treatment in the same manner as a state," allows the Tribe to establish water quality standards under the Clean Water Act for the lower third of the Lake. EPA's action today will help further the work of the Tribe and the State and local governments to develop a Lake Management Plan to protect water quality in Coeur d'Alene Lake.

The Tribe is working in partnership with the State and local governments to prepare a revised Lake Management Plan that is funded and implemented so that the Lake does not pose unacceptable risks to human health and the environment.

"This marks an important step in our ongoing work to support the Tribal-State-local government partnership to protect Coeur d'Alene Lake," said Ron Kreizenbeck, acting EPA Region 10 Administrator.

The Tribe and the State of Idaho are currently working to develop compatible standards. Since the standards that the Tribe is establishing are similar to the State standards, it is unlikely that there will be major changes to existing permits.

For more information about "treatment in the same manner as a state," you can go to EPA's Website:

www.epa.gov/r10earth/cdatas.htm - Please check Website after 4 p.m. PDT today.

For more information about Water Quality Standards you can go to EPA's Website:

<http://www.epa.gov/OST/standards/>

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